

Things That Never Were by TheAddict4Dramatics

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Summary:

Pregnant. Joyce pregnant with his child. Their child. Their child gone before it even came to be. Stupidly his shocked brain began to imagine all of the things that never were, that never could be now – he pictured a little girl that looked just like Joyce; all big brown eyes and messy hair and a beautiful, heart-lifting smile. Joyce/Hopper angst and some more angst.

Things That Never Were

Author's Note:

Please be aware this story deals with miscarriage/ loss of a child. Please do not read if you feel this may trigger something for you.

Hopper sprinted down the corridor, dodging left and right to avoid nurses and beds and god knew what else. He hated hospitals. Ever since Sara he couldn't stand to be in them and today was made even more unbearable by the fact he was there because one of his loved ones was in trouble and he didn't have a clue what was going on.

He rounded the corner and finally reached his destination as he saw Jonathan and Nancy sitting side by side on some of the hospital's generic plastic chairs.

"Jonathan..." He panted as he finally slowed in front of them. His heart was hammering in chest from both apprehension and exhaustion. The younger man stood to meet him, Nancy rising silently by his side. Both were quiet and looked withdrawn and the queasiness inside Hopper's belly doubled. "What's going on?" He demanded more fiercely than he intended.

"She's in there." Jonathan replied as quiet as Hopper's question was loud. He gestured to the closed door opposite them. "She doesn't want to see anyone."

"What happened?" Hopper demanded next. He took a big breath and tried to calm down. He needed to get a handle on himself if he was going to be any good to anyone.

Jonathan looked down at his question, he was clearly extremely uncomfortable as well as worried. Nancy took a step forward and reached for her boyfriend's hand. When Jonathan remained silent she answered instead:

"She had a miscarriage."

All of the air seemed to be sucked out of corridor as the news hung, physically heavy in the atmosphere around them. Hopper took a step backwards as if literally recoiling from the news. Miscarriage. He hadn't even known she had been pregnant. He felt the tears sting the back of his eyes as he blinked them away furiously in a desperate attempt to stop them falling. Pregnant. Joyce pregnant with his child. Their child. Their child gone before it even came to be. Stupidly his shocked brain began to imagine all of the things that never were, that never could be now – he pictured a little girl that looked just like Joyce; all big brown eyes and messy hair and a beautiful, heart-lifting smile. Somehow she looked like Sara too with her little button nose and freckles. Thinking of Sara made it worse, so much worse. He turned his back on Nancy and Jonathan and shoved the back of his hand into his mouth to muffle his sob.

"They couldn't stop the bleeding at first but they have now and she's stable." Nancy continued to explain to his back. "They say she'll be fine. She's just tired and upset, obviously." She finished quietly.

"I didn't even know..." Hopper said aloud, trailing off before he finished. He couldn't bring himself to say the word. Pregnant. But not anymore.

"I don't think she did either." Jonathan responded.

At least she hadn't been keeping it from him he supposed. At least she hadn't had time to get used to the idea, the make future plans. But then he hadn't either and he'd already conjured up an entire human being in the thirty seconds since he received the information. He took a big breath and tried to push all that he was feeling out with it. It didn't work of course but he needed to put it to one side for the moment. Joyce was the priority now and he needed to see her, to somehow try and make this alright.

He turned back towards the kids and saw Jonathan looking at him with trepidation. He knew he wasn't a child anymore but right then he looked like one. Like a scared kid who was desperately worried about his mother and couldn't do a damn thing about it. Hopper reached out and pulled him into a slightly awkward embrace. Jonathan froze for a moment before reaching round and patting Hopper on the back a couple of times.

"I'm sorry." Hopper said to him as they parted. He hadn't wanted this but god did he feel responsible.

"I'm sorry too." Jonathan replied before wiping at his eyes self-consciously.

"I know she said she didn't want to see anyone but I'm going to go in."

"Okay, we'll wait out here. I can go pick up Will and Jane later when it's time. I didn't tell them anything before I left. I didn't want to worry them." Jonathan explained.

"Okay, thanks kid. Just tell them that she's alright and I'll talk to them later."

That would surely be one of the most difficult and upsetting conversations of his life. He could picture Jane's face as he tried to think exactly what he would say to them. How to explain something he sure as hell didn't even understand himself. He hadn't even had that talk with his adopted daughter yet and he wasn't sure how much Will knew about the birds and the bees either, though he had an older brother and hadn't spent the first twelve years of his life in a science lab so surely he was at least a little more informed.

Jonathan nodded to his instruction and the movement brought him back to the present. He tried and failed to muster a convincing, reassuring smile to the kids and entered the room behind him.

Hopper closed the door behind him as softly as he could – he didn't want to disturb her if she was sleeping. One look in her direction made it painfully obvious this was not the case however. She lay on the bed, curled tightly in on herself in a ball, facing away from him. She wasn't moving at all bar the telling, heart-breaking wobble of her shoulders as she cried quietly to herself.

"Go away." She sniffed in a whisper as she sensed the presence behind her. She didn't turn to see who it was.

"No." Hopper replied with just as much gentle defiance.

She turned to look at him as she heard his voice. Her face was red

and blotchy from her crying and she looked like she hadn't slept in a year. She looked utterly broken and the sight made him want to run and hide and cry himself into nothingness in a corner somewhere. But he wasn't going to do that. He was going to stay and stick it out no matter how agonising it was likely to be.

"Hopper leave me alone." She begged still looking him in eye, imploring him to do as she asked. He shook his head, pursing his lips to stop the tears from falling.

"No." He repeated quietly.

She threw herself back over so her back was to him once again and curled herself into an even tighter ball, her arms hugging around herself in an attempt to physically block him out. She couldn't deal with his shock and grief in that moment. As horrible and selfish as it was she couldn't deal with his feelings too when her own were completely drowning her. Hopper stepped forward and removed his hat, jacket and boots one by one.

"Please just go, please go." She repeated as she heard him moving towards her.

"No." He replied for the third time, this time finally letting his tears fall as well.

She had huddled herself into the corner of the bed leaving ample room for him to lay beside her. He settled down behind her, facing her back and reached both arms around her to bring her closer to him until her back was against his chest. She flinched and stiffened at his touch but she did not physically fight him off. For a few moments they stayed in that silent, unyielding embrace until something seemed to break in Joyce, his physical touch releasing everything she had barely been managing to keep inside. She let out guttural, primal howl that sounded as if she were a wounded animal. Hopper's gut wrenched. He could do nothing. Nothing but hold her and cry with her. Occasionally he would kiss the back of her head or whisper comforting, meaningless words into her ear or stroke the skin of her stomach through the thin hospital gown she wore, but mostly he did nothing. He was just there and that is all he could be.

After several long minutes her crying began to slow. She took big, gulping breaths in an attempt to calm herself and then she suddenly grabbed his wrist with such force it was almost painful. She clumsily threaded her fingers through his, she was so tired even that was an effort, and then she brought both hands up to her mouth. She kept them there, her lips against his knuckles and her tears still falling onto both of their hands.

"I didn't know." She whispered shakily. He felt every syllable as she breathed them out against his fingers. "I wasn't hiding it from you, I didn't know, I swear."

"I know." He answered quickly, wanting desperately to reassure her he wasn't in any way angry with her. How could he be? He was just sad, desperately, desperately sad.

"I don't even want another child, it's just..."

"I know. Me too." He agreed tearfully. He left another lingering kiss to the back of her head before continuing. "I'm so sorry Joy..."

As irrational as it probably was he had an overwhelming sense of guilt. He had caused this in the most literal sense – he had got her pregnant and now she had lost the baby and was in such terrible pain and it was all his fault. He thought they had been careful but clearly not careful enough. Perhaps he had got cocky – they weren't twenty anymore so he had thought there was not such a risk but Joyce wasn't exactly sixty either. He should have been more careful. After Sara had died and Dianne had left he had almost had a vasectomy. He had been adamant he was never going to put himself in the position where he could ever possibly lose a child again. He'd booked the procedure but then had got off of his face the night before and slept through the appointment the next morning. He'd never rebooked and now they were here.

Joyce always seemed to have an eerie ability to read his inner-most thoughts and through her grief it appeared no different. She kissed the hand she held to her face tenderly as if she could sense all of the self-loathing that was currently rolling off of him in waves. She let go of his hand as she turned over to face him.

Her movements were slow and sluggish from a combination of the medication and the bone-weary tiredness she felt. And also because she was still in enough pain to be constantly uncomfortable. She resettled into her new position and snuggled towards him, burying her head in the crook of his neck and entwining their legs through the hospital sheet that was covering her. He gathered her close in his arms, wrapping them around her as if he could block out the rest of the world, if only he could. She sighed against him as her tears finally stopped.

"I love you." He told her simply. She knew that but God did she need to hear it.

"I love you too." She replied, her answer slightly muffled against his neck.

It was the confirmation he needed to know that she didn't blame him. Irrational as it may have been he couldn't have blamed her if she had. But she wasn't begging him to go anymore, she wasn't flinching at his touch. She was snuggling to get closer to him, her breathing slowing to suggest she may finally be about to get some of the rest she so desperately needed.

"I love you so much."

Those were the last words she heard, his lips against her forehead the last thing she felt before she fell into a long and deep sleep. He laid with her and held her the entire time. He couldn't do anything else; he couldn't make it better, couldn't ride in with all of the answers like he had done so many times for her in the past. But he could love her through this. And he bloody well would.